

# ZEN NOTES



君看此花枝  
中有風露香

*Kimi miyo kono kashi  
Naka ni fūro no kambashiki ari*

Do look at this flowering branch!  
All the fragrance of the wind and the dew  
is within it.

*Tōba shū*

Translation by Ruth F. Sasaki

## SOKEI-AN SAYS

**PERFUME** Just one grain of fine incense dropped in the fire produces a perfume which fills the room, or sweeps a whole street. Sometimes when you walk the streets of temple grounds in Japan, from somewhere a scent is blowing, floating through the air. "Is that magnolia?" you ask, perhaps. "No, it is a kind of incense that comes from India." It is a joy to pass through a temple street.

When you meet someone who practices samadhi always, you will feel his fine quality of mind, a quality which is not noisy, which is like a song, which isn't a word but has deep meaning. If you sit next to him, without speaking a word, he speaks in the silence one million words to you. That is the seed which he has cultivated in his own mind by the practice of samadhi. I like to sit down side by side with a man who has practiced meditation a long, long time. You feel his tranquillity of mind. The vibration you feel from him is entirely different from that radiated by those who have noisy minds. If you wish to be a beautiful man--I don't mean physically, but spiritually--you must keep this small seed of Mind deep within your consciousness. This is the secret of becoming a beautiful man.

IT is written in the Lotus Sutra that the Three Worlds, like burning houses, are not places where you can stay forever. What are these Three Worlds? In Indian Buddhism they are referred to as the Tridhatu: the Kamadhatu, the Rupadhatu, and the Arupadhatu; the World of Desire, the World of Appearance, and the World of Nonappearance.

When I was struggling to understand Buddhism, one day as I was thinking about the Arupadhatu because I could not understand what it was, all of a sudden I burst into it. Then the whole system of Buddhism became clear to my mind. To each student there is some gate through which he breaks into the main avenue. I entered through the gate which is called Arupadhatu.

The Buddha said: "Do not attach to the desire to stay in the Three Worlds." He handled the Three Worlds negatively, saying that the desire for Kamadhatu, the desire for Rupadhatu, and the desire for Arupadhatu must be abandoned.

The heretics (as the many sects contemporary with the Buddha are called) believed that the Arupadhatu was the highest abode, the highest state, the student could attain. Following a heretic, Udraka Ramaputra, the Buddha himself attained this state. But, realizing that the Arupadhatu was also a kind of attachment, he threw this Arupadhatu overboard and entered Absolute Annihilation. Henceforth in Buddhism, Absolute Annihilation was the highest subject that the student must comprehend.

**THE WORLD OF DESIRE** Sentient beings living in the World of Kamadhatu always have some desire--the desire of eating, generating, etc. There are many kinds of sentient beings, according to their type of desire.

Of course you must not think that the sentient beings living in the World of Desire are sinful or impure. It is a *condition* of sentient beings that they desire. It is like having your clothes wet when you are on the beach--it is the condition of being on the beach; there is water there and you cannot do anything about it. You mustn't misunderstand the nature of desire.

To keep the seed is one desire, the great desire of Nature. The human mother keeps the seed within herself. The mother of devas keeps the seed in that womb. Not only human beings, but all sentient beings have the desire to keep the seed within. It is not your desire or my desire, it is one of the great things that the Universe possesses. We have nothing to do with it, but we can do nothing without it. When we observe human life it must be from that angle.

To nurse the seed is another desire. And the seed sprouts and the stem grows from the seed and the flower blooms from the stem and conceives the seed. We call the four virtues relating to growth which are in the nature of desire the four sentient beings. Some beings have more capacity for opening the petals (we call it education). From this angle the teacher teaching you is not education, but when you marry and have children and keep house, when you perform your daily life, this is education. To carry out all potential powers in your daily life--that is the true meaning of education. There are also some to pick up the seed and carry it for another planting--like myself, carrying the seed to the West.

The seed which I have been talking about is in the category of food. The seed is also in the category of sex. There are four different sentient beings in the category of sex also. One kind of sentient being has the capacity to transform himself. It is his life and he enjoys life transforming himself. Then another enjoys to be transformed. Both of these sentient beings enjoy transformation: one to provide the transformation himself and the other to have his transformation provided by the other; one is the male, the other the female.

THE WORLD OF APPEARANCE Rupadhātu belongs especially to the eyes and ears. All other senses are counted, too, but especially we talk about the eye. This seeing has nothing to do with desire, has nothing to do with keeping the seed or nursing it or educating or creating or re-creating. It is just seeing. This seeing is a wonderful thing. Without this, we would never have seen the conclusion of our thoughts.

Of course hearing is very important too. Somewhere in the sutras the Buddha said: "In this world hearing is the highest sense." Hakuin Osho showed his hand and said: "Can you hear the sound of a single hand?" *Hear* the sound of a single hand! When you hear the sound of a single hand you can hear the endless sound which was never created and which will never vanish. This enlightenment comes through the ear, not the eye.

I cannot see the Buddha now, but through my ear I realize Buddha. Through my ear he is standing here beside me and he is talking to me and I am answering him. We understand all the Buddha's teaching through the ear. The Buddha therefore said: "In human beings hearing is the first virtue."

But to Zen students, seeing is the first virtue. Do not forget that. "Can you think about Reality?" "Yes, I can think about it, its nature, its state." "Then look at it!" "I can't look at Reality." Look at it, look at it! In Zen you *can* look at Reality. Therefore, in the Zen school, seeing is the first virtue.

In Rupadhātu there are many things to see and to hear. But without the five senses you can see and hear many things which others cannot. In Arupadhātu we see many things our eye cannot see, hear what our ear cannot hear. I thought I would like to see this world. One day I came to see it.

Buddhists must not think that Mind is included in this body. Our Mind is not living in this body. Our Mind is not living in this skull. This skull is just like a radio apparatus. Our Mind is always living in the Great Universe. When I walk I walk with the Universe. When I think, I think with the Great Universe, not with this little skull. And this thinking capacity is not my own. It is not my mind that thinks, it is the Mind of the Universe--a very mysterious word. It is not: I think just sixty years and after death I don't think. No. When you consider very carefully this is a great performance, a great drama of sentient beings in which we are taking part. When you see Tibetan paintings of monks performing, wearing masks, in ancient works, that means the different ways men see things. They symbolize all kinds of different sentient beings. This makes a wonderful drama. We are acting in it every day.

WE GET LETTERS....Everyday when the postman rings twice (to let us know it's he) we rush to the door to get first crack at the mail, for, in addition to the fun of being first to report, "South Africa's been heard from" or guessing at the contents, the opening of each individual envelope is in itself a Pandora's treat. Money? Orders? Photos? Perhaps a few fancy stamps from California, clippings, all kinds of enclosures get first attention, and then comes the best part, the letters. Some are from lonely hearts, some informative, others abusive...all are fascinating. Those that can be, or must be, answered instantly, are processed at once; the more complex go into a waiting file. Sooner or later we answer all of them in some way or other, so please don't be impatient if it takes even a year or two--one day we'll come to it. Occasionally, we find ones we feel like publishing. Which? Well, best we can say is: when they strike a clear, vibrant note of some kind, or vividly reveal some human being. For that is one of the purposes of ZEN NOTES--to strike a note, or to transmit something noted. It is our greatest satisfaction when someone out there hears. The following, from London, not just because it is complimentary, but because it points out a contrast we have had noted to us several times recently, we call to your attention.

Dear Sir:

I should like to take this opportunity to say that I have continued to find "Zen Notes" extremely valuable and I think that the December Issue (Vol.V.No.12) was not only the most valuable of the year but also one of the most important that you have issued.

Comparing your publication with publications in Europe dealing with Zen, it has struck me that yours is much more--shall I say, enterprising, radical, in the sense of freedom to explore wherever inspiration leads you. Maybe, this is due to the fact that you, in America, are less conditioned than we are by the long tradition going back to Greece and Rome. It seems to me, therefore, that whilst the more conservative approach to Zen which seems generally evident in Europe, may well be useful at times as a corrective to possible undesirable aberrations, the vigour and forthrightness with which you throw yourself into Zen holds out great promise for the future and is, of course, in the spirit of Zen itself.

Yours sincerely, S. A. Godfrey

**CORRECTION:** In Vol.V, No.10, page 2, we made the statement that Dr. Suzuki "had acted as interpreter for Soyen Shaku at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893." Dr. Suzuki did act as interpreter for Soyen Shaku, but not in Chicago in 1893. Actually, we are still not quite straight on his dates, but we'll try not to give wrong ones.

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Founded in 1930 by  
Sokei-an Sasaki

A square seal with a double-line border. Inside, the Chinese characters '第一禪院' (Dì Yī Chán Yuàn) are arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top-left character is '第', top-right is '一', bottom-left is '禪', and bottom-right is '院'.

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